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Mulvenna, Robert D.
Happy days

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Happy Days

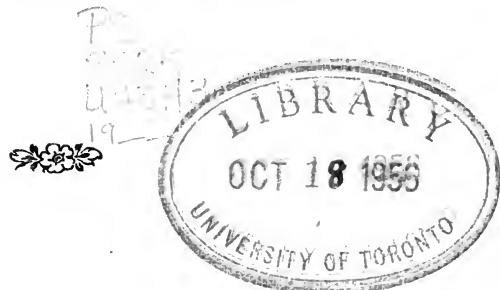
By ROBERT D. MULVENNA

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A Slightly Revised Version of

THE OLD HOME TOWN



" . . . In 'THE OLD HOME TOWN', Robert D. Mulvenna has set to rhyme his recollections of Toronto in earlier years. It brings many a pleasant memory to us and no doubt will to many others. . . ."

—J. V. McAree, "Globe and Mail".

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HAPPY DAYS

By ROBERT D. MULVENNA

Let us quaff and talk Toronto of the days
When only rich men could afford a car
And people, in their easy-going ways,
Were undisturbed by thoughts of coming war.
The good old days of Wilfrid Laurier,
The weekly publication, "Jack Canuck";
"Police Gazette"—with photographs so gay,
And beer all 'round for less than half a buck!
When immigrants were pouring into town
From Over There on every other train,
And unpaved streets re-echoed, up and down,
To sound of horsey wagons—built by Bain!
When wooden sidewalks were a common thing
And many outer streets had none at all;
When Ed-the-Seventh was the reigning King,
And Sam McBride was young at City Hall!
When peg-top pants and ruddy, button-boots,
Arm bands, black bows and very good cigars,
"Bull Durham" sacks and three-for-five cheroots
Were normal sights around Toronto bars!
When all Toronto homes were lit by gas,
Ere phonographs had yet become the rage,
Your present home-site just a field of grass,
And Ten-a-week was thought a decent wage!
Long lines of horse-drawn "Eaton" vans at morn,
And "Ocean Blend" and others—fruit and fish;
The German bandsman tooting on his horn;
Corned-beef-and-cabbage still a favoured dish!

When if, by chance, you lived in Cabbagetown,
You'd hear John Tingle's sleigh-bells in the snow,
When Winter temperatures had gone 'way down,
And all was well 'neath HYDRO'S fresh young glow!

The annual Militia Parade,
With even Standing Room in high demand—
The 48th—and how those kilts swayed
To Scottish Airs by Slatter and his band!

Or Summer-evening concerts in the park—
At Allan Gardens, Queens or Riverdale,
With merry crowds that lingered after dark,
And lovers whispering their age-old tale!

The old "Macassa" and "Modjeska", too;
Not quite so many salesmen at your door;
Loud noises from the uncompleted zoo;
Tall office buildings rising floor by floor!

The Merry Songs of those old, happy days!
The latest: "Alexander's Rag-Time Band".

The Old World folk, with all their Old World ways,
So thankful to have reached their Promised Land!

A great To-Do about some new-found mine,
And picnics—that were that—across the lake,
McConkey's serving Whiskey, Meals and Wine—
While good folk went to Church—for Heaven's Sake!

When "Bingham's" was the Trysting Place in town,
A rendezvous for many jolly groups;
That's where you met that girl in Summer gown;
I wonder do they still serve Double Scoops?

The early "Eaton" Santa Claus Parades;
You simply couldn't keep the kids in bed!

A Spectacle Indeed—for men and maids;
'Way back when Jimmie Simpson was a "Red"!

Let's hope you had the cash to let you in;
When Fiske O'Hara used to play The Grand;
And Two-Bits bought a flask of London gin!
In Winter weather, cold enough to kill,
The Circus came to town—a three-night stand—
With Arctic blasts that made the pavement sing,
That sturdy son of Ulster, Sandy Hill,
Directed traffic down at Yonge and King!
An afternoon or evening at "The Beach",
The Scenic Railway—and D'Urbano's Band;
The East-Side butcher shop of Charlie Meech,
Whose week-end cuts of meat were "simply grand!"
It was an age of juicy steaks and chops
And, if we ate too carelessly or hard,
They soon erased all trace of errant drops
At Langley's—then on Sumach, near Gerrard!
The organ-grinders on our down-town streets,
And peanut wagons, with their whistles, shrill;
Vast quantities of good, unrationed eats,
And change back from a single dollar bill!
Red King, an East-Side Letter Carrier,
Who daily used to bring around the mail;
A working gang in Riverdale's new park,
Who's Postal Address was Toronto Jail!
The old hotels and bar-rooms of the day—
The "Bay Tree", "Tremont", "Walker House" and "Queens".
A pleasant afternoon across the Bay—
With just a dollar-fifty in your jeans!
The Danforth "Civic" car line—out to Pape—
Or was it out to Greenwood-On-The-Farm?
World Series Baseball News—fresh off the tape,
On fine October days that seemed so warm!

A Sunday storm that sank so many ships
The length and breadth of all the larger lakes:
Ere local gals began to rouge their lips;
And what variety of pies and cakes!
"The Mid-night Choo-Choo Left For Alabam",
And no doubt carried quite a merry throng—
While R. J. Fleming ran Toronto Tram,
And everyone rode merrily along!
Those gay young blades who gathered in a bunch
At Queen-and-Yonge, Toronto's war-time Hub,
'Way back when "Soldier" Jones could pack a punch
And fellows joined The Irish Rifle Club!
Great Hockey Games that brought forth shrieks and shouts,
To keep the neighbours out of bed at night—
When Lou Marsh refereed the Boxing Bouts
And fans could often see a decent fight!
The blind and bearded gent with Lavender—
So long a fixture outside Eaton's store;
The Lennox Picnic—Herb's no longer there—
And Mrs. Dorsey's Eating House—no more!
Fairweather was a famous local Cop,
Who kept an eye on things around the Zoo;
The youthful "Tommy" Church—in Tails and Top—
When "EXTRAS" told Toronto what was new!
The Woodbine Race Track—shiny as a pin—
J. K. Macdonald's horses; Woodbridge Fair;
The C. N. E.—The Midway—and the DIN—
You may have met your future Mrs. there!
When Mary Pickford packed us to the doors,
At U-Kum, Kum-C, Carlton or Eclipse;
And, everywhere, those smokey little stores
That sold us Ginger Beer with Fish and Chips!

From time to time, some guy would break the Law—
To hang, or go to jail, or pay a fine;
Recall such front-page names as Harry Thaw?
Likewise, a certain "REGAL-LAGER" sign?
Jim Somers was a junior City Clerk;
Mulveney sold his famous Tape-worm Cure;
The unemployed took rest in 'Bayside Park,
While Doctor Hastings kept the water pure!
The Tories and The Grits were then as now;
Our Big-time Ball was played across the Bay;
The Brethren observed the Twelfth—and HOW!
With, usually, a warm and sunny day!
'Twas "Sliding Billy Watson" at The Star,
And thousands bought and read "The Sunday World".
"I'm On My Way To Mandalay"—then WAR,
And all the flags Toronto then unfurled!
The East-Side Liquor Store of Sam R. Dandy.
The "Tely's" witty items from the Courts;
The men who knew their brands—and kept them handy—
They always called for "Gooderham & Worts"!
Loew's "Winter Garden" fast became The Place
To entertain your girl-friend or your wife—
Then, satisfied, 'twas home to feed your face
"Salada" Tea with "Dempster's Staff-Of-Life"!
'Twas Denison and Cohen on The Bench,
With "Nedibus" too often in The Dock;
The First Contingent trained to aid the French,
While local lassies learned to knit a sock!
Time marches on—old neighbours down the street
Have, wasted by their various complaints,
Since then passed on Beyond to swell the sweet
Celestial society of saints!
I could go on and on, but I must close.
Such Memories may tend to draw your tears,
Though HAPPY DAYS—it seems to me—were those
When viewed in retrospect across the years!

Some call this piece "a Classic of its kind";
Some others say "it's very, very good".
I simply tabbed some thoughts that came to mind,
And typed it on my faithful "**UNDERWOOD**".

—THE AUTHOR.

Old-time Toronto business concerns may arrange with
the Author for copies bearing their own special imprint

Telephone: HA. 1606

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